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Themes for the high-level coordination segments of the substantive session of 2000 of the Economic and Social Council

Note by the Secretary General

1. The present note is submitted to facilitate consultations among Member States on themes for the high-level and coordination segments of the substantive session of 2000 of the Economic and Social Council.

I. Theme for the high-level segment

2. In its resolution 50/227, annex I, paragraph 53, the General Assembly decided that with regard to the theme for the general debate of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, following consultations with Member States and through the Secretary-General with members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, the President of the Council, should present a proposal for a topical theme for the following year at the annual substantive session of the Council, at which time the Council should undertake consultations on the theme for the high-level segment with a view to reaching a decision, if possible, during the substantive session but not later than at a resumed session in the autumn following the annual session.

A. Proposals of Member States

3. The Secretary-General consulted Member States through a note verbale dated 15 April 1999, as a result of which he received the following proposals for a theme:

* E/1999/100 and Add. 1

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(a) The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: regional integration in the process of globalization of the world economy;

(b) Germany on behalf of the European Union: overview and assessment of the periodic review of the implementation of the recommendations of the major United Nations conferences of the 1990s;[1]

(c) Lebanon: economic and social development within the context of post-conflict peace-building;

(d) Romania: financing sustainable development: national and international strategies to mobilize resources, and the efficient use of these resources in the context of globalization and interdependence;

(e) Switzerland:

(i) The role of developing countries in the millennium round of the World Trade Organization (WTO);[2]

(ii) The role of United Nations operational activities in the challenges of the 21st century;

(f) Uruguay: multilateral trade liberalization at the beginning of the twenty-first century as an instrument for development — full inclusion of the various sectors of the economy under the multilateral regulations of the trade system, access to markets, and elimination of export subsidies and of internal support measures in the agricultural field.

B. Proposals of bodies of the United Nations system

4. The Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination, Department for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, consulted the relevant bodies of the United Nations system through a letter dated 20 April 1999, as a result of which he received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention of the United Nations Secretariat: United Nations action to combat organized crime and the world drug problem;[3]

(b) United Nations Environment Programme: appropriate ways and strategies to achieve more sustainable use of energy, taking fully into account the economic, social and environmental conditions of all countries, in particular developing countries;

(c) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: no specific theme was proposed. However, it was suggested that the selection of the themes could be linked with proposals that emerge from the consultations currently under way in preparation for the Millennium Assembly. Appropriate themes agreed upon in that process could be initially debated in the Council, in preparation for the Assembly;

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[1] The European Union indicated that this suggestion was based on Council resolution 1998/44, para. 17.

[2] In his report on restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (E/1999/59), the Secretary-General has recommended that the Council organize high-level special meetings with the international trade institutions, particularly the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and WTO, and consider the socio-economic impact of trade policies, particularly in the framework of the forthcoming round of negotiations for trade liberalization.

[3] This theme would be linked to the adoption of the convention against transnational organized crime, which is expected to be completed in the year 2000 for adoption by the Millennium Assembly.

(d) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: the Council should address issues related to the millennium, in conjunction with the Millennium Assembly;

(e) International Civil Aviation Organization: the contribution of international civil aviation to sustainable economic development and the promotion of peace and understanding among peoples of the world;

(f) World Health Organization (WHO): the role of the United Nations in achieving peace at the beginning of the new millennium: social movements for health and human development;[4]

(g) World Bank:[5]

(i) Poverty, malnutrition and marginalization;

(ii) The normative aspects of the development process and the role of different stakeholders, including the private sector (covering such issues as human rights, environment, labour rights, Africa, gender, drugs and the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS));

(iii) New trends in the development assistance paradigm and their implications for the United Nations system, including the economic development's effect on war/conflict, participation by different communities among NGOs and civil society, and the private sector role;

(iv) New issues on the Council agenda: examining the linkages between economic development and sustainability, culture and cultural rights, indigenous peoples, impact on family structures, ethics, moral and spiritual dimensions and those who are excluded from development;

(h) World Intellectual Property Organization: intellectual property protection: an inalienable component of sustainable development, a critical factor for investment in economics and development of new information technology in a global market;

(i) Universal Postal Union: the information society and the rapid evolution of information and communication technologies offering new challenging opportunities for further economic and social development worldwide, taking into account the postal dimension.

[4] WHO proposes the following subtopics: 1. Health and economic productivity; 2. The inseparable dyad of health and development; 3. The relevance of information and communications technologies for development: the role of the United Nations organizations; 4. Polio eradication by the year 2000; 5 Sustainable development: the unifying theme of major international conferences and the central role of health; 6. The role of health in poverty reduction; 7. Health and trade: the reduction of non-tariff barriers to trade; 8. The role of vulnerability reduction in sustainable development; 9. Health as a bridge for peace; 10. Information society: the role of communication technologies for sustainable development; 11. The globalization/economic crisis and their impact on social development; 12. Coordinating the work of the United Nations system to promote international solidarity and reinforce the contribution women make to building societies, with affordable and equitable access to productive goods and services for all; 13. Social and economic determinants of health; 14. The communication revolution and human development.

[5] The proposals of the World Bank refer to both the high-level and the coordination segments.

C. Proposals of intergovernmental bodies

5. The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the General Assembly invited the Council to consider dedicating one high-level segment before 2001 to human settlements and the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.[6] More recently, the General Assembly, in its resolution 53/180, invited the Council to devote its coordination segment in 2000 to human settlements issues and the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

6. In adopting UN-NADAF, the Assembly requested the Council to devote part of its high-level segment to the implementation of UN-NADAF before the Assembly's final review and assessment of its implementation in the year 2002.[7] The Council could consider examining the implementation of UN-NADAF as part of its high-level segment either in 2001 or in 2002, to serve as an input into the final review by the General Assembly.

7. The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/86, invited the Council to consider including the question of violence against women at the high-level segments of one of its forthcoming sessions, in the context of its discussion on the human rights of women.

D. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

8. In selecting the theme for its high-level segment, the Council may wish to take into account the following considerations:

(a) The Council may choose a major economic and/or social policy theme of topical interest;

(b) The theme should allow for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach;

(c) The theme should enable the Council to receive the maximum benefit from ministerial participation and from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system, including the international trade and financial institutions;

(d) The deliberations of the high-level segment should provide political impetus for building areas of convergence and facilitate the consideration of the issues in question, including the emergence of new recommendations on the issues in relevant forums (see Assembly resolution 45/264, annex, para. 5 (d) (i));

(e) It may be recalled that the Agenda for Development specified that the high-level segment of the Council should be used for improving the synergy between the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. In so doing, the Council should also contribute towards enhancing the interaction between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO (see Assembly resolution 51/240, annex, para 252 (a));

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[6] See *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 220; and General Assembly resolution 52/190, para. 13.

[7] When it adopted UN-NADAF, the General Assembly decided that the Council should devote part of its high-level segment in 1998 to the implementation of UN-NADAF, and that the Assembly would conduct its final review in 2000 (see Assembly resolution 46/151, annex, sect. II, para. 43). In its mid-term review of the implementation of UN-NADAF, the Assembly decided that the final review would take place in 2002 (see Assembly resolution 51/32, para. 6).

(f) It may also be recalled that in the event that a matter of high urgency and priority subsequently emerges that would qualify as a theme for the high-level segment, the Council may, as appropriate, consider that theme as an additional topic for discussion at the high-level segment (see Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I, para. 53).

9. Box 1 highlights the themes examined by the Council at its high-level segments in previous years.

Box 1
Themes examined by the Council at its high-level segments since 1992

1992: "Enhancing international cooperation for development: the role of the United Nations system"

1993: "World Summit for Social Development, including the role of the United Nations system in promoting social development"

1994: "An agenda for development"

1995: "Development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s"

1996: "International cooperation against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotics and psychotropic substances and related activities"

1997: "Fostering an enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows, investment and trade"

1998: "Market access: developments since the Uruguay Round: implications, opportunity and challenges, in particular for developing countries and least developed countries, in the context of globalization and liberalization"

1999: "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women"

II. Possible themes for the coordination segment

10. In its agreed conclusions 1995/1,[8] the Economic and Social Council invited the Secretary-General, taking into account the suggestions made in his report on the coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields (see E/1995/86, para. 57) and based on the work of relevant subsidiary bodies and through consultations with Member States, relevant organs of the United Nations system and specialized agencies, to offer suggestions for possible common themes for the follow-up of major international conferences for consideration and decision by the Council. The Council decided that, in that segment, it should carry out a review of cross-cutting themes

[8] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/50/3/Rev.1), chap. III, para. 22.

common to major international conferences and/or contribute to an overall review of the implementation of the programme of action of a United Nations conference. The Council also decided that the theme for the follow-up to conferences would be chosen at the Council's previous substantive session to allow for adequate preparations.

A. Proposals of Member States

11. The Secretary-General consulted Member States through the above-mentioned note verbale dated 15 April 1999, as a result of which he received the following proposals for a theme:

(a) Germany on behalf of the European Union: two issues should be considered:

(i) Human settlements;

(ii) HIV/AIDS;

(b) Lebanon: follow-up, coordination and implementation of the resolutions of the World Summit for Social Development;

(c) Romania: human settlements and the implementation of the Habitat Agenda;

(d) Ukraine: coordinated follow-up to the United Nations conventions in the sphere of environment protection and related activities.

B. Proposals by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

12. The Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination consulted the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system through the above-mentioned letter dated 20 April 1999, as a result of which he received the following proposals for themes:

(a) United Nations Environment Programme: an integrated approach to issues related to oceans and seas;

(b) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development: the Council should examine issues pertaining to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be hosted by the European Union in 2001;

(c) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations system:

(i) Bilateral-multilateral coordination of crisis prevention;

(ii) The role of social cohesion in economic development;

(d) World Health Organization:

(i) International cooperation to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS;

(ii) International convention for the control of tobacco consumption;

(iii) Coordination of the United Nations system for vulnerability reduction;

(iv) Social and economic determinants of health;

(v) Coordination of various approaches for country empowerment and human development;

(e) World Bank: see paragraph 4 (g) above;

(f) International Maritime Organization: international cooperation in ensuring implementation and compliance of international instruments.

C. Elements to be considered in selecting the theme

13. In selecting a theme for its coordination segment, the Council may wish to take the following factors into account:

(a) The theme should be a major cross-cutting outcome of several international conferences in the economic, social or related fields;

(b) The theme should be a subject of operational relevance to a number of organizations of the system and/or a subject in respect of which several functional commissions have been active;

(c) The theme should have a significant policy dimension so as to maximize the benefit that could be derived from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system during the discussions;

(d) The discussion of the theme by the Council and the agreed conclusions on the theme should contribute to enhanced coordination of policies and activities by the United Nations system.

14. Themes examined by the Council at its coordination segment to date are listed in box 2.

Box 2
Themes considered by the Council at its coordination segments since 1992

1992	• Assistance in the eradication of poverty and support to vulnerable groups, including assistance during the implementation of structural adjustment programmes
	• Prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and programmes addressed to the mitigation of its negative socio-economic consequences
1993	• Coordination of humanitarian assistance: emergency relief and the continuum to rehabilitation and development
	• Preventive action and intensification of the struggle against malaria and diarrhoeal diseases, in particular cholera
1994	• Science and technology for development
	• International cooperation within the United Nations system against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances
1995	• Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the results of major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields
1996	• Coordination of United Nations system activities for poverty eradication (three sub-themes)
1997	• Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system
	• Freshwater, including clean and safe water supply and sanitation
1998	• Coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
1999	• The development of Africa

15. The Secretary-General also identified a number of common themes emanating from conferences in his 1995 report on coordinated follow-up to major international conferences (E/1995/86), which are presented in box 3. They continue to serve as useful categories for selecting a theme on coordinated follow-up to conferences.

Box 3

Themes identified by the Secretary-General in his report on the coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields (see E/1995/86, para. 57)

(a) A stable macroeconomic policy framework conducive to development

(b) External debt and finance for development

(c) International trade and commodities

(d) Science and technology

(e) Eradication of poverty and hunger

(f) Access to productive occupational opportunities, full employment and family incomes

(g) Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women

(h) Basic social services for all: primary health care, nutrition, education, safe water and sanitation, population and shelter

(i) Promoting social integration

(j) Environment and natural resources

(k) Africa and special categories

(l) Participation, democracy, human rights, accountability and partnership with major groups, non-governmental organizations

16. It should also be underscored that the Assembly, in its resolutions 45/264 and 48/162, provided for the Council's coordination segment to deal with one or more themes. In resolution 50/227, the Assembly provided that the Council may give consideration to choosing a second theme dealing with concrete sectoral issues. Thus, in addition to the theme for follow-up to conferences, the Council may also wish to choose a sectoral theme at its substantive session.

III. Proposals and recommendations by the Secretary-General

17. In its resolution 1998/44, the Council agreed to consider conducting in the year 2000, as a possible contribution to the Millennium Assembly, without prejudice to the discussion of this issue by the General Assembly, a review by the Council of progress made within the United Nations system in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, and related fields.

18. Since its major debate on coordinated follow-up of major United Nations conferences was held in 1995, the Council has provided guidance on themes common to all conferences at its high-level, coordination and operational segments, and has devoted special sessions to the coordinated follow-up to conferences. In 2000, five years will have passed since the Council undertook this major endeavour and the five-year reviews will have been completed. It is therefore proposed that the Council undertake during its high-level segment a review of progress on common and cross-cutting themes emerging from conferences, including coordination within the United Nations system.[9] Such a review could then be presented to the General Assembly as a contribution to the Millennium Assembly (for details on this proposal, see E/1999/63).

19. With respect to UN-NADAF and the least developed countries and in view of the importance given by the General Assembly to these topics, the Council may wish to consider, at an appropriate time, devoting its high-level segment to the implementation of UN-NADAF immediately before the review by the General Assembly in 2002, and devoting its coordination segment or another appropriate meeting to the least developed countries immediately before the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2001.

20. During the panels convened in preparation for the high-level segment in 1999, health-related issues were discussed and presented as an important component of poverty eradication, which has not received much attention by the Council until now. It was also stressed that working on health for the poor requires a broad partnership between Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. As a coordinating body, the Council could foster a concerted approach at the international level for appropriate action by all actors.

21. In the light of the above considerations and following up on proposals contained in document E/1999/63, the following themes are recommended for the Council's consideration in 2000:

High-level segment

Review of progress made on common and cross-cutting themes emerging from major United Nations conferences of the 1990s

Coordination segment

1. Coordinated implementation by the United Nations system of the Habitat Agenda[10] and/or

2. International assistance for health vulnerability reduction

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[9] In 1995, the Secretary-General identified four such broad cross-cutting goals that cut across all United Nations conferences: (a) the enabling environment, (b) basic social services for all: primary health care, nutrition, education, safe water and sanitation, population and shelter; (c) access to sustainable livelihoods, full employment and family incomes; and (d) environment and natural resources. See E/1995/86, para. 57.

[10] Following the invitation made to the Council by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/180.